

# First record of Common Coot *Fulica atra* for the Cape Verde Islands

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**Première mention de la Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* pour les Îles du Cap Vert.** Le 11–12 novembre 2010, une Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* adulte a été observée et photographiée à l'embouchure de Ribeira da Madama, Sal. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'archipel. Un deuxième individu a été observé au Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, en février–mars 2011.

Common Coot *Fulica atra* is a widespread European bird also found in North Africa, the Middle East, India, Central and Eastern Asia, Australia, Tasmania, New Guinea and New Zealand, with a total of four subspecies (Taylor 1996, Snow & Perrins 1998). In Macaronesia it has been recorded breeding in the Azores, where it is mainly a winter visitor (Pereira *et al.* 2010). In Madeira, Common Coot was only recently recorded breeding (Fagundes & Romano 2009), whilst in the Canaries it has colonised Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife and La Gomera since the 1980s, with possible breeding reported on La Palma (Barone & Lorenzo 2007). In the Cape Verde Islands, the only record is of a subfossil coracoid from the Holocene, collected on Sal, in the sediments of a former lagoon (Boessneck & Kinzelbach 1993).

In the late afternoon of 11 November 2010, between 17.00 and 18.00 hrs, we observed an adult Common Coot at a temporary lagoon



**Figure 1.** Adult Common Coot *Fulica atra*, Ribeira da Madama lagoon, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, November 2010 (Stefan Cherrug)

Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* adulte, Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, novembre 2010 (Stefan Cherrug)

at the mouth of Ribeira da Madama, Sal. The bird was seen again at the same site during the early morning of 12 November, when it was photographed (Fig. 1). The bird was rather shy, but it fed along the lagoon's borders and in its central part, enabling good views using telescopes and binoculars.

The lagoon forms during heavy rains in late summer and autumn (Fig. 2), the main wet season in the Cape Verde Islands (Hazevoet 1995). Its borders are covered by halophytic vegetation, including *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and *Suaeda mollis*, which are locally common on Sal and other islands of the archipelago. The distance between the lagoon and the coast is c.150 m.

Other aquatic species observed at the lagoon on 11–12 November 2010 were: 12 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, a female Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, a female Common Teal *A. crecca*, three Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, a Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, ten Kentish Plovers *C. alexandrinus*, a male Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, two Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*, a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, a Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (12 November), and three Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*. Additionally, an adult Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was present on 11 November.

This first observation of Common Coot in the Cape Verdes brings to 169 the number of migrant, non-breeding species recorded in the archipelago (*cf.* Hazevoet 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2010, Hazevoet *et al.* 1996). We suppose the species is only a rare visitor to the Cape Verde Islands, which lie outside the African wintering grounds, where Common Coot reaches south to Senegal and nearby countries (Taylor 1996, Snow & Perrins 1998). The current creation of watersheds in the Cape Verde



**Figure 2.** Partial view of the temporary lagoon of Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, in November 2010. Following the rainy season, this is one of the best sites for waders and other aquatic birds in the archipelago (Rubén Barone)

Vue d'une partie de la lagune temporaire de Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, en novembre 2010. Après la saison des pluies, c'est un des meilleurs sites de l'archipel pour les oiseaux d'eau (Rubén Barone)

Islands could produce more records of this and other Rallidae. Indeed, a breeding population of Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* is now established at the recently constructed Barragem de Poilão on Santiago (Hazevoet 2010), which has become one of the best sites for waterbirds in the archipelago. A second Common Coot was seen there in February–March 2011 (Hazevoet in press).

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